

PHILOSOPHY OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

September 2017

Introduction: Worship encompasses the entirety of appropriate individual and corporate engagement with God. Corporate worship is but one facet of biblical worship. The following statements are intended to be used as a guide to unify us around a common theology and practice of corporate worship at Henderson Hills Baptist Church.

I. Corporate Worship Is About God, Not Us

Wayne Grudem defines the assembling together in corporate "Worship" as "the activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts . . . when we are conscious of adoration of Him in our hearts . . . when we praise Him with our voices and speak about Him so others may hear" (1003). Worship is, as all of life and all of the church is, wholly aimed at glorifying God. He is the One worthy of worship. He is the one who deserves our attention and our affection. God exhorts us to worship Him as a jealous God who will not share his glory with another, but He also deserves our worship as the Creator of the Universe, the giver and sustainer of life, and the pure essence of love.

2 Kings 17:36; Matthew 22:37-38; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Psalm 147:1; Exodus 20:3-6; Psalm 148:13; Hebrews 12:29; 1 John 4:8

II. Corporate Worship Is the Spirit-Filled Response of the Christian to God's Self-Revelation

Based on what we know about God (primarily from the reading and preaching of God's Word), we are drawn to worship Him by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us as believers.

Romans 11:33-36; Psalm 8; 95:6, 7; 147

Implications:

- A. We will prioritize the preaching of God's Word, but we will do so in a way that does not neglect the importance of the other elements of worship.
 - B. We will read Scripture and allow it to call us into worship.
 - C. We will allow Scripture to govern the content of our worship.
 - D. When appropriate, we will be slow enough and contemplative enough in worship to allow God's Word to settle into our hearts and minds.
 - E. We will unashamedly seek to have our services move both the mind and heart.
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III. Corporate Worship Must Glorify Christ and His Work

God has exalted Jesus and given Him the name above all names. His person and work are and will eternally be the foundation and focal point of our praise. Therefore, we will set our focus and adoration on Him.

2 Corinthians 10:5; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25

Implications:

A. We will prioritize songs that exalt Jesus Christ. We will sing of His work in His life, death, burial, and resurrection.

B. We will seek to move people to see and savor Christ above all else.

C. We will plan our services to lead people to feel the weight of our sins, but even more so to glory in the grace that is shown in Christ. We will strive to edify and equip believers, while committing ourselves to share the Gospel regularly and often.

IV. Christians Are Commanded to Assemble Together in Corporate Worship and They Are Instructed as to What They Are to Do When They Assemble

Scripture is clear that Christians are called not to forsake the corporate assembly with other believers in the local church. That means that in our own day Christians are to commit themselves to participate in Christian worship with a local body of believers. We affirm that the elements of worship described in the New Testament are essential (though not necessarily exclusive) to our practice of worship here at Henderson Hills. Additional elements might include personal testimonies, video presentations, etc. Those elements explicitly outlined in Scripture for church gatherings include the following:

1. Corporate Singing 2. Reading of the Word 3. Preaching of the Word 4. Prayers (including confession, repentance, etc.) 5. Giving 6. Observing the Lord's Supper 7. Observing Believer's Baptism

A. We will preach the Bible, pray the Bible, and sing the Bible.

B. The proclaimed Word has and always will be the driving force in our corporate gatherings.

C. The Lord's Supper and Baptism are two elements that should hold a central place among the people of God; therefore, we will give appropriate prominence when both are observed.

D. The content of our corporate worship should reflect the full gamut of Christian emotions and experiences.

Singing: Psalms 95:2; Psalms 105:2; Ephesians 5:19; Prayer: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Luke 6:12; Luke 22:39-46; Acts 12:12; Acts 13:2; Bible Teaching: 2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 20:7-11; Giving: Acts 2:44-46; Baptism: Acts 10:48, Acts 22:16; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 4:4-6; The Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

V. Corporate Worship Is Primarily Intended for Believers

The corporate gathering is primarily for the believer, especially church members who actually constitute the local church.

Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 6:14

Implications:

A. All Christian worship should glorify God and edify the saints.

B. We will emphasize biblical content that encourages believers to grow in spiritual maturity.

VI. Corporate Worship Is Deliberately Conscious of Non-Believers

We anticipate and welcome non-believers. We will, therefore, speak to them at various times and in appropriate ways. 1 Corinthians 14:23-25

Implications:

A. We will acknowledge the presence of non-believers and speak to them hospitably, yet urgently.

B. We will always aim to present the gospel to non-believers in various ways and lengths.

C. We will practice distinctively Christian elements, and we will be "user-friendly" in our practice of those elements (i.e. briefly explaining and navigating through what we are doing and why, at times explaining certain lyrics, trying to avoid unnecessary "church-speak," etc.).

VII. Corporate Worship Should Reflect Our Diversity

Edmond is not a monolithic city, and Henderson Hills is not a monolithic church. We have young and old, rich and poor, and various ethnicities. The gospel transcends any one culture, generation, socio-economic class, etc. Diverse peoples united in the church uniquely demonstrate the power of the gospel.

Revelation 5:9-14; Matthew 5:46-47; Ephesians 2:11-22; Romans 15:1-6; James 2:1-4
Implications:

- A. Corporate worship should be varied enough to speak to the full range of human emotions, stages of life, generations, socio-economic classes, etc.
 - B. We want to value and preserve the multi-generational congregation that God has given us.
 - C. We will strive for diversity of styles in presenting elements of corporate worship.
 - D. Our worship will value seeing and using a variety of gifted leaders who reflect and highlight our unity in the gospel as well as our cultural diversity.
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VIII. Corporate Worship Should Engage Both the Mind and Heart

Head knowledge and heart affections are never divorced in the Bible. Rather, they are very much connected. Right thinking stokes affections which transform lives. Therefore, the content of our worship services should be filled with sound doctrine, but it should also be aimed at the heart.

Luke 10:27; Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Implications:

- A. We will prayerfully and carefully seek to create a culture and air of expectancy in our services.
 - B. We desire and believe that God is in our presence when we gather, and, therefore, we will aim to praise Him passionately with our whole beings.
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IX. Corporate Worship Is a Spiritual Enterprise Led by Spiritual People

Corporate worship is a spiritual endeavor led by spiritually mature people. Putting someone in front of our congregation on stage is an implicit endorsement of them as a Christian, whether that is intended or not.

1 Timothy 3:8-13; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17

Implications:

- A. All involved in leading various aspects of corporate worship (including the preacher, music leader, musicians, and those leading in greetings, prayer, practice of ordinances, and benediction) should be godly servants.
- B. We will be led in worship by the members of our church, unless an exception is made by the Elders.
- C. Corporate worship leaders will be well prepared as a natural consequence of desiring to bring glory of God.
- D. All involved in leading corporate worship will work in concert with the teaching pastors and elders.

